

SALUTE TO WYCOMBE — THE CUP KINGS!

IT LOOKED all over as Newport's Rod Jones chipped the ball over goalkeeper John Maskell, just three minutes into the second half. The ball dipped and seemed to be dropping into the net, but then struck the crossbar and was hurriedly cleared away.

If ever there was a key turning point in a game, this was it. Had the ball entered the net, I wouldn't have fancied Wycombe Wanderers' chances in Saturday's epic F. A. Cup first round clash with the Fourth Division professionals from Newport County.

But it didn't. And Wanderers went on to record one of their most thrilling and emotional victories for many years. What followed that incident was quite amazing. Wycombe proceeded to play some superb football, scored three goals and won themselves a place in the second round for only the second time in their history. The previous occasion was back in 1959 when they lost 5-1 to Watford at Vicarage Road.

Many were wondering who was man of the match on Saturday. The truth is, there wasn't one. All 12 players emerged as heroes, each gave 100 per cent effort.

Poor Newport. They were on a hiding to nothing when they came to Loakes Park and after Wycombe's second goal, their heads visibly sagged. They had seen it all before, only three years ago when they were shattered 6-1 at Barnet, the Southern League club.

For years people have been saying that the top Isthmian League clubs are on a par with the Football League Third and Fourth division outfits. Saturday's game proved it and in the end, it was obvious that County had been well and truly outgunned. Two of the goals came after some delightful football from the home side and both Tony Horseman and Mick Hollifield could have increased the scoreline in the closing stages. By that stage, however, it didn't really matter. Wanderers were well on the road to victory and weren't going to let it slip from their grasp.

When Keith Searle was injured at Walthamstow last Saturday, I for one, felt Wanderers' chances of success had diminished considerably. The Blues themselves could have been excused for being a trifle pessimistic and even more so when full back Rob Williams had to leave the field with a groin injury after 29 minutes. Substitute Tony Brothers came on and took over the full back spot for the first time in his career. He went on to play one of his best games for a long time.

This really epitomised the spirit of the Wycombe side on Saturday. Yes, the chips were down and stacked against them. But with the marvellous crowd of over 6,000 roaring them on, they proceeded to give a magnificent display.

Just how good were Newport? Just how much of a threat were centre back Steve Aizlewood, valued at £50,000 by County and Harold Jarman, their tricky veteran winger? The answer didn't really unfold until the second half. It was then that we saw the professionals really struggling to withstand concerted Wycombe pressure. Aizlewood, the club's leading goalscorer, was never given a chance to show his attacking flair and indeed, looked poor in comparison with home centre half Dave Bullock. Jarman was strangely ignored on the flanks and only occasionally dangerous.

In the first half very little time was given away and the number of clear-cut opportunities were few and far between. Young centre back Mick Hancock, only 18 years old, made a series of timely interceptions but even at this stage, Newport looked susceptible to the quick breakaway.

There was an anxious moment for John Maskell in the 14th minute when Willie Brown challenged the keeper for Graham Coldric's cross and the ball ran loose, but Bullock was on hand to boot the ball clear.

Wycombe were understandably nervous in the early stages and

hammered the ball away from the penalty area at the slightest hint of danger. Constructive football was therefore limited.

Newport's troubles began in the 15th minute when referee Spencer, who had earlier spoken to Len Hill, booked him for dissent. A minute later Steve Perrin broke clear through as Newport looked for offside, and screwed the ball wide. It was the first time County had been caught square at the back but they failed to heed the warning and eventually paid the penalty later in the game.

As the half progressed the choice of newcomer Terry Keardon for Brothers in midfield, really began to prove its worth. He fitted in as if he'd been with the side all season and his ability to slow the game down proved invaluable.

Spencer turned down appeals that Macey had stepped over his line.

Newport offered precious few attacking ideas and left Jones and Brown upfront to try and bustle Wycombe into errors. Jarman was rarely given a chance to show his undoubted skill and after 45 minutes the score was still goalless.

Only three minutes of the new half had elapsed when Jones struck the crossbar with that crucial lob. And for the next ten minutes, it seemed Newport, having sussed out the opposition, might pull clear. They dominated play for the first time in the match and had Wanderers distinctly rattled. Wycombe's nerves again began to show at the back as Jones went close once more, sending the ball just wide from Hill's cross. Two minutes later full

it seemed a goal had to come sooner or later and sure enough, in the 62 minute, amidst tremendous encouragement from the crowd, Wanderers went ahead. Tony Horseman, Wycombe's very veteran striker, made the goal with an astute chip into the path of Perrin. Big Steve outran the cover and took the ball to a narrow angle. He had a choice to either square it back or shoot for goal himself and plumped for the latter — with devastating effect. Macey, with about four yards to go, seemed to have way blocked but such was the power of Perrin's drive that it went through his arms and bulged the back of the net. The roar from the crowd must have been heard in Princes Risborough!

A goal down, Newport had to come forward and this presented Wycombe with more space upfront. It was from a breakaway that the Blues went two up five minutes later. Roger Grant sprinted down the flank before being upended by a desperate tackle from Coldric. Roger took the free kick himself and hit it hard into the box. Macey couldn't head the cross and dropped it straight onto the head of Perrin, racing in. The ball was going over the line when Tony Horseman helped it on its way, but the goal was still credited to Perrin.

Two nil! By this time the crowd were going wild and the roar was even greater when Dylan Evans made it 3-0 in the 71st minute. Again it was Horseman who fashioned the score, robbing Hill and slipping the ball through to Evans. The Welshman had one defender to beat for a shot at goal and managed to shrug off Hancock's sliding challenge. From about 15 yards out Dylan unleashed a superb cross-shot that left Macey grasping at thin air as the ball whistled into the net.

By now the match seemed well and truly out of reach for Newport. They had no answer to the enthusiasm of the home side and could easily have fallen further behind. Horseman headed just past the upright from Mick Hollifield's left foot corner and then in the 79th minute Hollifield brought the save of the match from Macey. Mick raced through into the penalty box and unleashed a tremendous drive which looked a goal all the way. Macey however, flung himself to his left and tipped the ball away. Sixty seconds later he repeated the feat from another Hollifield shot.

By now Newport had nothing to lose by coming forward and for the last ten minutes they bravely mounted a final assault on the home goal. Jarman brought a finger tip save from Maskell which Brothers cleared off the line at the expense of a corner.

Six minutes from the close substitute Wynne Hooper, who had come on for Willie Screen in the 71st minute, pulled one back when he slotted the ball home after a flick-on from Brown.

It only served to add more excitement to the match. Had Hancock netted a good chance in the 88th minute instead of screwing the ball past the post, things could have got decidedly uncomfortable for Wanderers. But they held out and came back themselves with Horseman sending a header straight into Macey's arms after Hollifield had intercepted Brian Godfrey's attempted clearance. It must have been an unpleasant experience for the Newport skipper, who, only a few seasons ago, was playing regularly with mighty Aston Villa. Here he was now, 3-1 down to a team of amateurs.

Even in the last few seconds, Wycombe looked confident. Bullock delicately cleared one final moment of danger and ten seconds later referee Spencer brought this classic to an end. Small wonder the pitch was invaded by admiring fans at the end.

WYCOMBE WANDERERS: J. Maskell; R. Williams (sub. A. Brothers 29 mins) P. Wood, D. Bullock, R. Grant, T. Reardon, M. Hollifield, L. Pritchard, A. Horseman, D. Perrin.

NEWPORT COUNTY: J. Macey; G. Coldric, M. Hancock, S. Aizlewood, M. Sprague, B. Godfrey, W. Screen (sub. W. Hooper 70 mins), L. Hill, W. Brown, R. Jones, H. Jarman.

REFEREE: D. D. Spencer (Swindon).

HALF TIME: 0-0

GOALSCORERS: Wycombe — Perrin 2 (62, 67), Evans (71); Newport — Hooper (84).

ATTENDANCE: c.6888.

Wycombe Wanderers 3, Newport County 1

Report by STUART EARP



In the 23rd minute Dylan Evans, playing in Searle's centre forward shirt, wasted Wycombe's best chance of the half. Tony Horseman broke through inside the visitors' box and although almost brought down, managed to slip the ball to Evans who blazed high over the top.

Then in the 29th minute, Williams was forced to leave the field and Brothers came on. At first it looked as though Reardon would drop to full back but after a minute, the Wycombe bench decided to try Brothers in the number three shirt. He didn't let them down. Hancock joined Hill in the referee's book after 34 minutes when he tugged Evans' shirt after the centre forward broke through. It was a "professional foul" and showed just how stretched the pro's really were on occasions.

Roger Grant, whose overlapping posed real problems for Newport, gave John Macey a fright in the 36th minute when the keeper gathered Roger's long cross just underneath the crossbar. Referee

back Coldric joined the attack and roared into lash the ball wide from Jarman's far post cross.

The kick and rush pattern of play continued in the second half but brought little reward. As the game progressed, however, Wanderers at last began to play their normal game. Passes found the mark accurately and the through ball again had Newport in trouble.

Evans broke clear after a one against one situation with Aizlewood who pulled Dylan back by his shirt. Unlike Hancock, Aizlewood got away with the offence but again it showed Newport could be caught on speed.

On the hour, Larry Pritchard, an inspiration in midfield, set up a force goalmouth melee with Horseman twice having the ball at his feet but then being robbed on both occasions. At the other end, Jarman beat Grant for pace and fired in a low drive that Maskell saved well.



It's all over. The scoreline Wycombe 3, Newport 1. Tony Horseman (centre) walks off the field followed by Steve Aizlewood and Steve Perrin.